Newsletter for Birdwatchers

Vol. 38 No. 1 & 2 Jan./Feb 98

Vol. 38 No. 1 & 2 Jan./Feb 98

■ **Editorial**

- Saving our Natural Heritage
- Checklists

■ **Articles**

- Birding at Nelapattu & Vedurupattu Bird Refuges, Andhra Pradesh, by Vinoj Matthew Philip, A.N. Jaganatha Rao and B.N. Sridhar
- My year of the Pelicans, by Lavkumar Khachar
- Laggar Falcons and Bonelli's Eagles in Pune, by Rahul Purandare
- Observations on the Vocalizations and Display of the Broadtailed Grass Warbler, by T.R. Shankar Raman
- Birds of Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary, by S Ashok Kumar
- Bird Migration and Flight Safety over Israel, by Yoram Yom-Tov

■ **Correspondence**

- Comments on the Newsletter, by V. Santharam
- Comments on the Newsletter, by Aasheesh Pittie
- Checklists, by Snehal Patel
- Blackcapped Kingfisher, by Ashish Kothari
- Baikal Teal at Tilpara Barrage, by Kaushik Deuti, Arup Halder, Aloke Das and D K Biswas
- The Red-Faced Malkoha in India, by T W Hoffmann
- Shikras in Coorg, by Lt Gen B C Nanda
- Goosanders in Assam, by Dr D Barooah
- Swans follow microlight mother home
- Eric Lott's postcards on birds, by Bob Stewart and Tanya Balcar
- Asian Koels feed on young flowers of papaya plants, by Arunayan Sharma
- Report to Members of the International Ornithological Committee, by Walter J. Bock
- Sun Bird - 'A Small Wonder' Nesting for its next Generation, by N.E. Thyagaraj
- Observations on some birds on *Ficus benghalensis*, by Rajiv Saxena
- 200 species of birds in a day in Kaziranga, by Maan Barua
- Identification of Natural Areas, by Dr. S. Thirumurthi
- Birds on Oilpalm, by A.K. Chakravarthy and S. Nagaraju

■ **Announcement**

- Handbook of the Birds of the World, Vol. 4

Editorial

Saving our Natural Heritage

The new year begins on a cheering note : Dr D Barooah (Dass Pharmacy, Temple Road, Sibsagar, Assam 785 640) writes to say that the article on the wetlands of Panidihing (NLBW July-August 97) "helped forcing the Forest Dept of Assam to notify the area as a Bird Sanctuary. Things moved palpably faster after the appearance of the report of poisoning adjutant storks in your periodical ...."

I hope that our future articles about areas of exceptional natural interest will also result in their protection by the public and the authorities.

Sometime ago, Manohar Malgonkar, the well known writer, wrote to the Editor about the need to preserve the Supa lake and adjoining forests in North Kanara from "development". Apparently a major steel plant is proposed to be set up in the area, and there are plans to denotify portions of sanctuaries nearby so that developers do not infringe the law about a *cordon sanitaire* in the 20 km area around Protected Areas.

The Karnataka Heritage Society under the Chairmanship of Ex-Chief Secretary J.C. Lynn is attempting to preserve this natural treasure, but as yet the signs are not too favourable.

In spite of our Govt. accepting the principles of the World Conservation Strategy, and ratifying the Convention on Biodiversity, industry still receives precedence against the unaccounted advantages of the natural world. What is so distressing is that there is no "openness" in government behaviour. All major decisions are kept under cover till the last minute, and then a decision is announced so that the public do not get a chance to voice their true feelings. If we follow the practice of having a Public Hearing on all major issues, the authorities would be in a much better position to take decisions on the basis of the presentations they receive.

Checklists

With reference to my previous Editorial about not publishing entire checklists on the plea of lack of space there have been protests from knowledgeable readers against this practice, and so we will have to find space for sparrows and crows as well as for the rarest birds. It is true that to have a complete list of the birds of an area is a great convenience.

■

Birds of Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary

S. ASHOK KUMAR, Plot No.491, Road No.10, Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad 500 033 (AP)

Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary, one of the oldest, is located in the Duars region of West Bengal nestling under the foothills of Bhutan. The lofty snow ranges of the Himalayas loom large in the background. Due to the untiring efforts of E.O. Shebbeare, the then Head of the Bengal Forest Service, it became a Game Sanctuary in 1941 and later a Wildlife Sanctuary in 1976. The Sanctuary situated in Jalpaiguri district is 128 kms from Siliguri on the Siliguri-Guwahati highway. Covering 216.51 sq kms it is shaped like a pair of trousers with a waist of maximum width of 4 kms and the narrowest width of 500 metres, and each leg is about 18 kms long. Earlier the Torsa river was flowing on the western leg of the Sanctuary while the eastern leg was being drained by a mountain stream Malangi. After the 1968 floods, the Torsa changed its course flowing through the eastern leg merging with Malangi. A number of rivulets Hollong, Chiraphowa, Kalijhora, Sissamara, Bhaluka and Budi Torsa traverse through the Sanctuary making the ecology of the forest riverine. The other forest type is savanna, dry and moist deciduous forest. The river bed of Torsa, in its former course, has changed into an alluvial savanna and grassland which supports tall grasses like *Themeda arundinacea, Saccharum* species, *Imperata cylindrica, Arundo donax* etc., the favourite fodder of the rhino. There are 71 species of grass including Typha latifolia and Napier grass and 514 species of trees, shrubs and herbs. As the soil is rich Sheesham (*Dalbergia sissoo*), Khair (*Acacia catechu*) and Semal (*Bombax ceiba*) started coming up threatening the grassland ecosystem. Paradoxically the authorities are fighting against nature to protect nature namely the vital grassland. The usurping trees such as Sheesham, Khair and Semal are cut and removed at the sapling stage or pole stage. This operation aimed at 'canopy opening' is one of the management practices adopted. High humidity in the sanctuary is ideal for the growth of weeds like *Lantana camara, Eupatorium* and *Micanea chordata* which overwhelm the grassland vegetation. Hence these are slashed and burnt paving way for the new grass to come up.

The forest on the western side consists of Sheesham, Semal, Siris (*Albizia procera*), Khair, Kumbi (*Yellow Silk cotton*) and Bauhinia species while the forest on the eastern side comprises thick Sal (*Shorea robusta*) connected to Chilapata forest range. The common shield fern (*Dryopteris filiximas*), a pteridophyte is in profusion encompassing the forest floor while the thick undergrowth consists of herbs, shrubs, creepers and tall grass. The towering Sal trees are wreathed in creepers particularly Micanea chordata, an obnoxious weed. There are a number of gymnosperms (Cycas) and ephiphytic orchids, the most common being *Vanda roxburghii* and *Dranaria quercifolia.*

The great diversity of vegetation and the network of rivers and rivulets have made this sanctuary a home for a rich variety of avifauna. According to Sri Sen Gupta, Asst Wildlife Warden, the sanctuary contains about 240 species of birds. Since the access to a large part of the sanctuary is only by elephant, birding is confined to the vicinity of Hollong lodge, banks of Hollong river and the Peacock avenue. However I and the other members of the BNHS Nature camp did a bit of birding sitting on elephant back. The birds observed are listed below.

[Scientific names of birds as in Pittie and robertson]

Family : PHALACROCORACIDAE		
1	Little Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax niger*
Family : ARDEIDAE		
1	Little egret	*Egretta garzetta*
2	Pond heron or paddy bird	*Ardeola grayii*
Family : ACCIPITRIDAE		
1	Crested serpent eagle	*Spilornis cheela*
2	Honey Buzzard	*Pernis ptilorhyncus*
3	Indian whitebacked vulture	*Gyps bengalensis*
4	Palla's fishing eagle	*Haliaeetus leucoryphus*
5	Crested hawk eagle	*Spizaetus cirrhatus*
Family : PHASIANIDAE		
1	Common Peafowl	*Pavo crisatus*
2	Red Jungle Fowl	*Gallus gallus*
Family : COLUMBIDAE		
1	Red turtle dove	*Streptopelia tranquebarica*
2	Spotted dove	*Streptopelia chinensis*
3	Little brown dove	*Streptopelia senegalensis*
4	Imperial pigeon	*Ducula badia*
5	Thickbilled green pigeon	*Treron curvirostra*
Family : PSITTACIDAE		
1	Alexandrine parakeet	*Psittacula eupatria*
2	Roseringed parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*
Family : ALCEDINIDAE		
1	Common kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*
2	Whitebreasted kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*
Family : MEROPIDAE		
1	Small green bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*
Family : CAPITONIDAE		
1	Great hill barbet or Himalayan great barbet	*Magalaima virens*
2	Bluethroated barbet	*Megalaima asiatica*

Family : UPUPIDAE

1	Hoopoe	*Upupa epos*

Family : PICIDAE

1	Lesser goldenbacked woodpecker	*Dinopium bengalense*
2	Mahratta woodpecker or yellowfronted pied woodpecker	*Dendrocopos mahrattensis*

Family : LANIIDAE

1	Rufousbacked shrike	*Lanius schach*
2	Grey shrike	*Lanius excubitor*

Family : ORIOLIDAE

1	Blackheaded oriole	*Oriolus xanthornus*

Family : DICRURIDAE

1	Black drongo or king crow	*Dicrurus macrocercus*

Family : STURNIDAE

1	Common myna	*Acridothetheres tristis*
2	Pied myna	*Sturnus contra*
3	Greyheaded myna	*Sturnus malabaricus*

Family : CORVIDAE

1	Jungle crow	*Corvus macrohynchos*
2	Indian tree pie	*Dendrocitta vagabunda*

Family : CAMPEPHAGIDAE

1	Scarlet minivet	*Pericrocotus flammeus*
2	Small minivet	*Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*

Family : IRENIDAE

1	Common Iora	*Aegithina tiphia*

Family : PYCNONOTIDAE

1	Redvented bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*
2	Redwhiskered bulbul	*Pycnonotus jocosus*
3	Blackheaded yellow bulbul	*Pycnonotus melanicterus*
4	Black Bulbul	*Hypsipetes leucocephalus*

Family : MUSCICAPIDAE

Sub-Family : Timalinae

1	Himalayan whistling thrush	*Myiophonus caeruleus*
2	Slatyheaded scimitar babbler	*Pomatorhinus horsfieldii*

Sub-Family : Muscicapinae

1	Tickell's blue flycatcher	*Cyornis tickelliae*

Sub-Family : Sylviinae

1	Reed warbler	*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Sub-Family : Turdinae

1	Blue rock thursh	*Monticola solitarius*
2	Magpie-robin or dhyal	*Copsychus saularis*
3	Shama	*Copsychus malabaricus*
4	Collared bush chat or Stone chat	*Saxicola torquata*

Family : SITTIDAE

1	Velvetfronted nuthatch	*Sitta frontalis*

Family : MOTACILLIDAE

1	Grey wagtail	*Motacilla cinerea*

Family : PLOCEIDAE

Sub-Family : Passerinae

1	House sparrow	*Passer domesticus*

Sub-Family : Estrildinae

1	Spotted munia	*Lonchura punctulata*

Sri Sen Gupta informed us that the Bengal florican, a rare bird (*Eupodotis benghalensis*) was spotted in 1995 in Torsa block. Small groups of mergansers (Eastern) or goosanders (*Mergus merganser*), which are winter visitors to North India are reported to have been observed near the rapid streams in the Sanctuary while ruddy shelduck or brahminy duck were seen on the shingle banks of Torsa river. The notable resident birds noticed were blacknecked and lesser adjutant storks, red-flanked bush-robin and the great sand piper and the lesser sand piper.

FACT FILE OF JALDAPARA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

1	Location :	Duars region, North of West Bengal.
2	Altitude :	160-230 feet above sea level.
3	Temperature :	December, 12°C; April 23°C.
4	Best time to visit :	December-April.
5	How to reach :	Nearest Airport : Hasimara (5 kms) Nearest Railhead : Madarihat (1 km) Hasimara (5 kms) Road :128 kms from Siliguri on Siliguri- Guwahati Highway. Siliguri is 5 kms away from New Jalpaiguri Rly Station.
6	Accommodation :	Hollong Forest Lodge (Western side) Boridbari Forest Lodge (Eastern side).
7	Boarding :	Available in both the lodges.
8	Transport :	Private and public transport available from Siliguri. Within the Sanctuary elephants are available on payment.
9	Whom to Contact :	Division Forest Officer, Wildlife Division II, P.O. Jalpaiguri, West Bengal.